

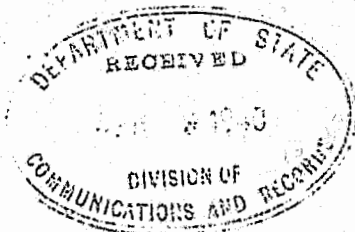


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THE FOREIGN SERVICE
OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

AMERICAN EMBASSY

LONDON, March 8, 1940.



No 232

CONFIDENTIALMEMORANDUM

Referring to H.V.J. Confidential Memorandum No.
130 Erben, Herman Frederick
215 dated February 5, 1940, regarding one Herman
Frederick Erben, our friends report that he sailed
on or about February 10th last from Chile on Grace
Line steamer "Nightingale", which passed through the
Panama Canal on February 14th bound for New York
is said to have signed on as cabin boy.

130-ERBEN, HERMAN FREDERICK

MM

0315087030

PCR

MAR 9 1940

CONFIDENTIAL

MAR 9 1940

No. 95

MEMORANDUM
(to London)

With reference to H.V.G. memorandum no. 215 of February 5, 1940 regarding Herman Frederick Erben, it may be stated that the subject of that memorandum has been under investigation for a considerable period, even prior to his travels in India in 1935. It is contemplated now that steps be taken to cancel his American citizenship on the ground that it was obtained by fraud. There is a considerable amount of information available on him, and many times the assertion has been made that he is a German agent. While his sympathies are decidedly pro-Nazi, it is questionable whether this person is astute enough to be an agent as his boasting and generally obnoxious demeanor tend to alienate from him persons with whom he comes in contact. If any further information is desired, it will be communicated promptly.

130 - ERBEN, HERMANN FREDERICK

03157030

Eu:REM:MMY:SS
3/7/40

A-B

m

PCR

No. 101

CONFIDENTIAL.MEMORANDUM
(to London)

APR 1 - 1940

Reference is made to H.V.J. memorandum no. 232 of March 8, 1940 and to J.C.D. memorandum no. 95 of March 9, 1940 regarding Herman Frederick Erben. ¹³⁰

Erben arrived at New York recently on the steamship Nightingale from Chile. His passport was taken up on arrival. Shortly thereafter he visited authorities here and desired that his passports be returned as mementoes of his trips. The request was refused. If Erben travels in the near future, he would more likely sail as a seaman, but there is no indication that he contemplates such action.

His conversation with authorities here tends to confirm the summary given in J.C.D. memorandum no. 95. He is given to boasting and to mysterious references that he is a German agent. There is nothing to vitiate any of the statements contained in J.C.D. memorandum no. 95 regarding his apparent lack of qualifications if he is a foreign agent.

Eu:REM:RMB 3/29/40

A true copy of
the signed orig.
Incl. *nm*

JCD

Wes

FE

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

DIVISION OF EUROPEAN AFFAIRS
May 13, 1938.

CLP. Jague
EU: PM

PA

I thoroughly agree with the attached memorandum from Mr. Kennan. Dr. Erben seems to be a thoroughly undesirable type to be traveling on an American passport, which he has misused. Furthermore I am not at all sure after looking at the photos attached to the passport applications that he is the same person who was first given a passport in that name.

EU: Flack.

Agree with
Mr. Kennan's comment
May 16

0315087030

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

DIVISION OF EUROPEAN AFFAIRS

May 13, 1938.

ONY:
 PM:

~~PAED~~

I can not see my way clear to initial-
ing this.

In addition to being an unmitigated scoundrel and having made trouble for our officers abroad uninterruptedly for about four years, this man

1) is a confessed Nazi agent and claims to have travelled behind the loyalist lines in Spain in that capacity, for the purpose of photographing Germans fighting on the loyalist side and turning the pictures over to the German Government;

2) has apparently not spent as much as a year altogether in this country since his naturalization in 1930;

3) was in Ethiopia, Spain and China while hostilities were in progress in those countries, despite the fact that his passport was not valid for either of the last two of these countries at the time;

4) has misused identification documents issued to him in the past; and

5) is now proceeding abroad with the announced intention of visiting (a) Spain, (b) China and (c) Austria, for the purpose of denouncing to the German authorities the Austrian police officials who had him deported from Austria some years ago, under the Schushnigg regime.

The man was here in the Department less than three weeks ago, explained his

and

130- ERBEN HERMANN FREDERICK

MM

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

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plans for proceeding abroad to an official of the Passport Division. His passport was not taken up at that time, although this was apparently perfectly possible. The official who interviewed him thought "that a careful check should be made on his activities and that this can be done ~~but~~ better by permitting him to travel on an American passport in his own name."

I feel very strongly that instead of continuing to keep track of Dr. Erben's activities in foreign countries (which we have been doing with no great profit or satisfaction for a number of years), it would be better to see that these activities, insofar as they are conducted under the protection of an American passport, should be terminated at the earliest possible moment.

I don't doubt that the Passport Division will have ample technical grounds with which to justify the supplying of American travel documents to Dr. Erben in the past and at present, but I cannot conceive that our passport laws were *really* intended to be exploited by adventurers of this sort.

4/11
Eu/Kennan

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